

A JOINT-LETTER from the most Considerable Proprietors of the Island of Barbadoes, to Colonel Richard Scot, Colonel Robert Stewart, Richard Bate, Patrick Mein, and Thomas Fullerton, Esqrs; and other Friends in England, having Estates or Interests in the said Island, touching the Petition which they lately transmitted to be given in to the Honourable House of Commons, for having the Trade to Africa carried on by a Company of a sufficient Joint-Stock; together with their Reasons subjoin'd.

Barbadoes, August 1709.

Gentlemen,

Being sensible that, both by Interest and Inclination, you are all engag'd to do Good to this Island, We think it indispensably necessary (and a Respect due to your Characters, to acquaint you) that we have signed a Petition to the Honourable House of Commons, representing, that unless the Trade to Africa be carried on by a Company of a sufficient Joint-Stock, We have not the least ground to expect that we shall have either a sufficient Number of Slaves imported here; or at such Rates as we may be able to purchase them, even in time of Peace. By which Misfortune We shall not be in a Condition to support our Plantations. And we are by Experience convinc'd, that the late high Prices given for Negroes has risen from no other Cause, but the Liberty given to Separate Traders; which, unless remedied in time, is like to prove fatal, not only to us, but to the British Trade upon the aforesaid Coast. We therefore hope and intreat, that you will zealously concern your selves in this Matter. In which you will oblige,

Gentlemen,

Your most humble Servants,

William Carter

John Davies

Thomas Afflick

Edward Jordan

Robert Osbourne

W.... Ashe

Robert Vaughan

Benj. Matson

George Foster, jun.

John Eastmond

George Nicholas

John Somers

John Dotin

Jos. Salmon

Jos. Todd

James Dotin

Jos. Salmon, Junior.

Zach. Shute

John Maverick

Raynes Bate

Benj. Bullard

Richard Sandiford

William Cleland

Thomas Beckles

John Pickering

Thomas Alleyne

Jos. Hannis

Thomas Sandiford

Timothy Salter

Sam. Marenicke

James Conse

Sam. Beresford

William Sharpe

John Scott

Reyn. Alleyne

Sam. Cox

John Whetstone

John Holder

Alex. Walker

Stephen Brown

Henry Peers

Phillip Austin

Thomas Stewart

John Sandiford

Henry Evans

Wardell Andrews

Edward Holder

Thomas Prideaux

John Rows

William Alomby

John Hooper

Sam. Lambert

Richard Wiltshire

Sam. Mattson

Richard Parsons

Jos. Brown

William Hooper

John Colleton

Joshua Weaver

John Carter

Daniel Hooper

John Jourdan

Miles James

Richard Hooper

Val. Morris

Sam. Collyns

George Foster

George Walker

John Durrant

Robert Waite

Conrade Adams

William Howard

John Hothersat

John Sharpe

Middleton Chamberlen.

Sam. Osborne

S.... Duranstein

Since, in all Petitions of a publick Nature, the several Qualities and Characters of the Persons, and not the Number of Hands subscribing, is to be regarded, especially in this Case ; it is thought necessary to inform the Honourable House of Commons, that the Subscribers to this Letter and the Petition therein mentioned, are Gentlemen of the best Characters and Estates in *Barbadoes*, and are now Proprietors and Owners of at least two thirds of all the Land and Negroes in that Island : But the other Petition that came from thence by the Interest of the Separate Traders, is sign'd mostly by a number of mean, inferior Persons, who have no manner of Plantations in the Island ; as the Gentlemen now here in *England*, to whom the aforesaid Letter is addressed, and who have Considerable Estates in the same Island, can easily distinguish. So that the one being the effect of a free Choice, from a due Consideration of their own Interest ; and the other being the effect of a servile Compliance, in a Matter that was indifferent to them, as having little or no Interest in the Plantations ; it is hoped that the Wisdom of the Parliament will have regard to them accordingly.

Then, as to the several Reasons which directed the Choice of those Gentlemen above-nam'd, in their petitioning for having their Trade to *Africa* carried on in the Method of a Company, having a sufficient Joint-Stock ; they were probably these, and such as these :

I. While the Trade to *Africa* remain'd under the sole Management and Direction of the *Royal-African-Company*, before the Revolution, they purchas'd Negroe-Slaves on the Coast of *Africa*, at about 3*l.* per Head ; and sold these again in the Plantations from 13*l.* to 16*l.* per Head ; whereas ever since the Interlopers made Infractions on the Privileges of the Company's Charter ; and more especially since the Permission granted to them in the Year 1697, by which the Trade has been laid open ; the Prices of Negroes have (by reason of interfering Interests, and a dis-concerted Management of the Trade) arisen gradually to such a height, that as there is no purchasing of them now on the Coast of *Guinea*, for less than about 8 or 10*l.* per Head at least ; so these have been sold again at *Barbadoes*, from 25*l.* to about 40*l.* per Head ; and at the Leeward Islands from 40*l.* to 60*l.* per Head : Nor have the Plantations been, of late Years, supply'd with sufficient Numbers of Negroes, even at any rate ; and that merely by reason of the great Discouragements which the Company have met with in their Trade, since the same has been laid open, as aforesaid. The truth of the Premisses will appear by the Company's Accounts of Sales (which are upon Oath) whatever may be falsely suggested to the contrary ; and likewise by particular Certificates from the principal Planters and Inhabitants of those Islands.

II. As the *Royal-African-Company*, and their Predecessors, may not improperly be esteemed to have been instead of a Parent and nursing Mother to the *British* Plantations in *America*, as contributing extremely to the first Foundation and Increase of that which renders them now so considerable to this Kingdom ; so the Planters may very justly be supposed to think, from the course of their own Observation and Experience, that their real Mother, the Company (if in power) may still have a more natural and tender regard to their Welfare and Interest, than any new Supervenient Sett of transient and unconstant separate Traders, who (for many Reasons that may be given) can be reckon'd, at best, but as a Step-Mother to these Plantations ; and consequently not so mindful of their Interest.

III. A Company with a Joint-Stock, and having the sole Management of the Trade to *Africa*, may easily give such concerced, regular and uniform Orders, Directions and Instructions to their several subordinate Officers, Agents and Servants, both at Home and A-broad, as may unquestionably, by degrees, bring down the Prices of Negroes on the Coast of *Guinea* ; and such Company having, by much, a greater regard to perpetuity, than we can suppose any transient separate Trader can have, will still of course, find it their own Interest to sell these Negroes again in the Plantations at proportionable Abatements of the Prices ; because indeed by encouraging the Planters, they not only enable them to be constant Purchasers, but likewise good and sure Payers : And the constant Practice of the *Royal-African-Company*, while they enjoy'd the exclusive Privileges of their Charter, is an antecedent proof thereof.

IV. 'Tis very certain, that neither the *Royal-African-Company*, nor the *British* Plantations in *America*, were ever in more prosperous Circumstances than when the Company trusted the Planters, from time to time, with considerable number of Negroes, to the value of many thousands of Pounds, until they could conveniently pay the same, to the mutual Satisfaction and Advantage of both Parties, yea, probably out of the Produce of the Labours of those very Negroes themselves : But neither the Inclinations or private Interests of separate Traders can prompt them to pursue such generous and national Ends, as a Company with a Joint-Stock must unavoidably have in their View, of course, as the best means of preserving and promoting their own Interests : For, as but very few or none of the private Traders (except such of them as have the benefit of Commissions and Commission-Houses) do constantly follow and persevere in the *African* Trade ; so neither

neither have they any Consideration in View, but merely a little selfish present Gain ; without any regard to the Interest of the Planters : Yea, most of them who went one Voyage (or sometimes two at most) have seldom or never gone another ; as may be seen by their several Entries in the Custom-House-Books : So that their having perhaps previously resolved not to return again, either to the Coast of *Africa*, or the Plantations, makes them pretty indifferent of any Imposition that they may have left behind them in those Parts.

V. Well ! But supposing that the Separate Traders had both Capacity and Inclination to trust the Planters, from Year to Year ; what then ? why truly, if by any unforeseen Accident, the Planter should happen to fail in making his Payments, precisely at the respective times agreed upon ; We cannot reasonably suppose but that, in such case, all the Separate Traders who trusted him, would immediately commence Actions against him ; and each of them having a different Interest, and consequently contending for a Presence, the Planter's Estate would of Course be torn in Pieces, by these Transient Interfering Traders : Whereas were he in the Hands only of one united Company having the sole Management of the Trade ; the Company would (for their own sake) have the same tender regard to the Preservation and Recovery of the Planter's Interest, as commonly a Landlord has to that of a Tennent who owes him some Arrears of Rent, and will not (for fear of turning his own Lands Waste) prosecute him with that rigidity that any other Transient and Indifferent Creditor will do.

VI. While the Trade to *Africa* is carried on, in any open Method whatsoever, the Planters can have no reasonable Security that they will be supply'd with sufficient Numbers of Negroes even at any Rate whatsoever ; nor can it be possible for them to know against whom they should exhibit their Complaints, for not supplying them duly ; because no Separate Trader is bound to trade longer or for more Stock than he thinks fit. But if the Company were establish'd exclusive, they may be obliged, to make all necessary Provision, from time to time, for supplying the Plantations with sufficient Numbers of *Negroes*, on reasonable Terms, so as the same may be for the mutual Security, Interest and Advantage of all Parties concern'd.

Then, as to the Separate Trader's vain and empty Clamour, concerning a pretended *Monopoly* ; when the Trade is carried on by a Joint-Stock it is equally Frivilous and Ridiculous. Yea it may be easily made Evident, even to a moral Certainty, that while the Trade to *Africa* is continued open, in any notional Shape whatsoever, the unavoidable Consequences thereof do and still must prove a pernicious *Monopoly* in the Hands of about a Dozen of private Traders, having the sole Benefit of Commissions and Commission-Houses, &c. and plainly otherwayes if it were committed to the liberal Care, Tuition and uniform Management of above 1000 Joint-Adventurers who, to compass their own Ends, must unavoidably of Course, employ constantly a Stock of 4 or 50000*l.* and several Thousands of Hands, in carrying on and improving the said Trade to any certain Advantage. And, in such Case, it will be simply impossible for them to improve their own Interest, without Communicating and Diffusing the many Advantages thereof through the whole Circle of the Trade of *Great Britain*.

So therefore 'tis hop'd that Clamour, Calumny and Scandalous empty Pretences, will no longer be allowed to take Place against so many Weighty Arguments in Favour of a Joint-Stock-Company, founded upon Reason, Experience and the Universal Practice of all other European Nations Trading to *Africa*.

A Letter from the most Considerable Proprietors of the Island of *Barbadoes*, to the several Persons in Great Britain interested in the said Island, requesting their Application to the Honourable the House of Commons, for Establishing the African Trade by a Joint-Stock.